

126 10
Christ's Favour to little Children,
Open'd and Improv'd:

IN A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
Publick BAPTIZING
OF A

Child in London, March 6, 17¹²/₁₃.

By MATTHEW HENRY, Minister
of the Gospel.

*Publisch'd with some Enlargements, at the
Request of divers that heard it.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for John Lawrence, at the Angel in the Poultry ;
Em. Matthews, at the Bible in Pater-noster-row ; R. Ro-
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Printed for John I. Gorton, at the Angel in the Parish
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A SERMON OF

Christ's Favour to little Children.

Mark x. 16. *And he took them up in his Arms, put his Hands upon them, and blessed them.*

Application was made to our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon Earth, on a great Variety of Occasions; some we find imploring his Favour upon one Account, and some upon another; some for themselves, and some for their Relations; some for the Body, and some for the Soul; thus was fulfill'd the Prediction of the dying Patriarch concerning Shiloh, that *To him shall the Gathering of the People be:* And be it observ'd, for the Encouragement of all that humbly and in Faith apply themselves to him, Of the Multitudes that spread their Complaints before him, he never sent any away from him, *asham'd of their Hope* in him: He gave them all an *Answer of Peace*, and they had what they came for.

Gen. 49.
10.

But here in this Paragvagh of which my Text is the Close, we have Application made to Christ, upon an Errand different from any other, but such a one as those that know the Heart of a Parent, of a Christian Parent, will be glad to be encourag'd and directed to come to him upon, and will therefore bless God that 'tis here upon record. There were those that brought Young
A 2 Chil-

Children to him, that he should touch them, v. 13. In St. Matthew's Gospel 'tis said, they desir'd that he would put his Hands upon them, and pray.

Mat. 19.
13.

Who they were, that brought these Children, we are not told, whether their Parents or no; 'tis most likely they were, for who shou'd shew so much Concern for them as they? Nor are we told what Number of Children were brought, nor whether they were all of one Family, nor just of what Age they were; but as to that,

Luke 18. St. Luke tells us they were *Infants*, τὰ Βρέφη, 'tis the

15.

Luke 2. the Babe in Swadling Clothes, and in the Manger; and it

12, 26.

1 Pet. 2. Criticks say it signifies a Child at Nurse; they are said

2.

See Dr. Whitby. to be brought to Christ, which intimates, that they cou'd not go themselves; and 'tis plain they were very little, for he took them up in his Arms, so little, that he cou'd easily hold them in one Arm, for so he did when he put his Hands upon them to bless them.

Christ came to teach, and heal, and bless; to teach a World that sate in Darkness, to heal a World that was sick and dying, and to bless a World that lay under the Curse.

Now (1.) These Children were not brought to Christ to be taught, for they were not yet capable of receiving Instruction, nor cou'd they profit by his Preaching, or put any Questions to him. Those who are grown up to Years of Understanding, have need to be busie in getting Knowledge now, that they may redeem the Time they lost, thro' the Inevincible Incapacities of their Infancy.

Not (2.) Were they brought to Christ to be cur'd, for it doth not appear that they needed it. Little Children are indeed liable to many Distempers, painful mortal ones. The Physicians have a Book among them *De Morbis Infantum*. Death and its Harbingers reign even over them that have not sinned, after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression; but these Children were strong and healthful, and we do not find that any thing ail'd them.

Rom. 5.
14.

But (3.) They were brought to Christ to be bless'd; so they meant when they desir'd that he would touch them; the Sign is put for the thing signified; the laying on of Hands, was a Ceremony anciently us'd in blessing

Blessing; when *Joseph* brought his Two Sons to *Israel*, Gen. 48. and put one to his left Hand, and the other to his Right, that he might *touch* them, that which he desir'd was that he wou'd *bless* them: So these, here brought their Children to Christ, not that he might *touch* and *heal* them, but that he might *touch* and *bless* them, with the *saving Strength* of his *Right Hand*. 13.

They look'd upon Christ as a Prophet, as a Great Prophet, as *that Prophet* which shou'd come into the World, Gen. 20. as one that had a great Interest in Heaven, and consequently a great Influence upon this Earth: Now if he be a Prophet, he shall pray for thee, but then thou must pay him so much Respect as to desire his Prayers; this Honour they here give to Christ (as 'tis fit those shou'd do, that expect to receive Favour from him) in their humble Request, that he would lift up a Prayer for their Children, which they believe will avail much, Jam. 5. as the effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man doth. 16.

It is good to have an Interest in the Prayers, of those that are of the spiritual Seed of *Jacob*, that seek God, and know how to wrestle with him, and to improve that Interest for our selves and our Children; we should not only pray with and for our Families our selves, but engage the Prayers of our Friends for them, that we may hereby not only put an Honour upon Prayer, but put an Honour upon our Brethren, and upon the Communion of Saints, not only the Communion of Churches, but the Communion of Religious Families, who all meet in him, in whom all the Families, all the praying Families of the Earth are blessed. Gen. 12. A Treasury of Prayers laid up for our Children, may stand them in better Stead, than Thousands of Gold and Silver laid up for them. But if we desire this Kindness of our Friends, and Brethren and Ministers, we must remember that one good Turn requires another, and must therefore make Conscience of praying for them and their Families, as for our selves, and for our own, St. Rom. 15. Paul who prays so earnestly for his Friends, doth as earnestly desire their Prayers for him. The Lord give Mercy to the Households of our Acquaintance, is a Petition which (or something like it) should have a Place in our Daily Prayers. 2 Tim. 1. 16.

Now the Text tells us, how they sped, who brought their little Children to Christ to be blest'd, and pray'd for, how well they sped. And

And it is recorded by *Three* of the Evangelists, because it was a manifest *Indication* of the Design of Christ, to continue to the Children of Believers, under the New Testament Dispensation, the same *Covenant Right*, and *visible Church-Membership*, which they had under the Old Testament Dispensation, by Vertue of God's Promise to *Abraham*, and *his Seed*, that Blessing of *Abraham*, which comes upon the Gentiles through *Jesus Christ*; and because it gives us great Encouragement when we come to Christ *our selves*, to bring *our Children* with us, and *present* them also to him.

Gal. 3.

14.

They that brought these *Infants* to Christ, were *frown'd upon* and *discountenanc'd* by the Disciples; they *rebut'd* them, because they would not have such a *needless* Trouble (so they thought it) given to their Master, who had other Work enough upon his Hands; if this be encourag'd they shall see no end of it; was it not enough that he *cur'd the Sick*, which none but he cou'd do, but he must *blest the Well* too, which others might do? How well is it for us, that our Master has more *Tenderness* and *Compassion* than the best of his Ministers have, and is touch'd more *nearly* than they are or can be, with the *feeling of our Infirmities*, and an Inclination to gratifie those innocent Desires, of *humble and believing* Supplicants, which those that think themselves *polite* and *refin'd*, look upon with a *Slight* as not worth taking Notice of. In Grace and Goodness

Heb. 4.

15.

Hos. 11.

19.

Heb. 2.

28.

Isa. 55.

2.

Exod. 33.

18, 19.

Jah. 1.

14.

Xp's ds

vere

Xp's ds

1 Pet. 2.

3.

As when God promis'd to shew *Moses* his Glory he proclaim'd all his Goodness, and caus'd that to pass before him, so our Lord *Jesus*, when he would let his chosen Ones see his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, he shew'd himself upon all occasions full of Grace. Among Men it is look'd upon to be the Symptom of a *sweet* and *loving* Disposition to take notice of *little Children*, and to be familiar with them: By this, among many other Instances, our Lord *Jesus* shewed himself to be *kind* and *benign*, *meek* and *lowly in heart*; that upon all occasions he discovered

vered a particular kindness for *little Children*, and never more than upon this occasion; when he gave a severe Reprimand to his Disciples for prohibiting those that brought their Children to him; he was much displeas'd at it; he was both sorry and angry that his own Disciples did not better know his Mind, and that they should be *Adversaries* to those for whom they ought to have been *Advocates*: And he gave orders immediately that they should be called to him, who brought the Children, (who peraps, upon the Disciples check, were going off) and that room should be made for them to come to him: By all means suffer the little Children to come to me, and do not forbid them, for they belong to the Church still as much as ever: The Kingdom of God which I come to set up includes them; they are within the Allegiance of *Messiah* the Prince, and he will own them as his Subjects.

inward
truth.

And not only for the Satisfaction of those that brought them, and to please them, but for the Benefit and Advantage of the Children, he took them up with a great deal of endearing tenderness in his Arms, put his Hands upon them, and Blessed them; did not only pray for a Blessing, as they desir'd, but commanded the Blessing, as one having Authority, even Life for evermore, which is inclusive of all Blessings. Pf. 133: 3.

But what Encouragement (you'll say) doth this give to us? Christ is not now among us as he was then, and we cannot either make such addresses to him, or receive such Favours from him as they then might: 'Tis true we cannot in such a sensible manner, but we may as really in a spiritual way make our Applications to him, and expect Communications from him; for in him all fullness dwells, to him all Judgment is committed, and the Knee of every Supplicant must bow to him: And we are sure he hath Blessings as much at command now as ever he had: And therefore from the kind Entertainment he gave to these Children that were brought to him, we are warranted to infer his readiness to receive our Children that are offer'd up to him, for it is certain never any one was the worse for going to Heaven.

From hence observe then, That our Lord Jesus hath given us great Encouragement to hope, that he will favourably

Doct.

rably accept our little Children, when in a right manner we bring them to him for a Blessing.

I shall endeavour to shew, (1.) How we must now bring our little Children to Christ. (2.) What Entertainment we may promise our selves they shall find with him, according to this Instance in the Text. And then, (3.) Make Application.

For the 1st, Those that are truly ambitious of this Honour for their Children, and covetous of this Wealth for them, to have them Blessed of Christ, cannot but wish to know, how they may bring their Children to him, so as that they may hope to obtain his Favour. Say not in thine Heart who shall ascend into Heaven, where Christ sits at God's Right Hand, and take my Children with him thither to receive his Blessing: No, *The Word of God is nigh to thee*, and Christ in the Word, and his Blessings, to be received by Faith, applying the word to our selves, The *Tabernacle of God* is among us, the Priests, the Spiritual Sacrifices, the *Israel of God*, where two or three of them are gather'd in his Name, he will be in the midst of them; both to receive their Homage, and to give out his Favours. Where his Ordinances are Administer'd according to his Institution, and those things which he has Commanded, observ'd and taught; there will he be all Days, even to the end of the World. There he records his Name, and there will meet his People, and bless them. Nay, where-ever a true Christian is, there's a Living Temple, in which God is Serv'd and Honour'd, and his Blessings and Favours communicated by his Spirit dwelling in the Heart. There is still a way of access to Christ, a new and living way, by which we may not only come to Christ our selves, but bring others to him, bring ours to him, our Children that are pieces of our selves.

Four ways we must bring our Children to Christ.

First, By *surrendring them to him*. When by a deliberate and solemn Act of our Souls we resign and give up, with our selves, the Children also which God has graciously given us to the Lord Jesus to be to him for a People, and for a Name, and for a Praise, and for a Glory, to be Christians, devoted to his Honour, and employ'd in his Service, to be members of that Body whereof he is the Head; Servants in that Family whereof he is the Master; and Subjects in that Kingdom of his among

Rom. 10.
8.

Mat. 18.
20.

Mat. 28.
19, 20.

Jer. 13.
11.

among Men, which is incorporated by that great Gospel Charter, *Disciple all Nations into the Name of the Father, Mat. 28. Son and Holy Ghost*; then we may bring our Children to 19. Christ: We present them to him (a poor Present to him Rom. 12. who has a World of Angels at Command, yet such as 1. he requires and will accept of) as *living Sacrifices*, which we desire may be *holy and acceptable*, for it is our *reasonable Service*.

Parents are invested by Nature in a Right to their Children, and an Authority over them for their good. A Daughter in her Father's House, was accounted by Num. 30. the Law not *sui juris*, he could *dissolve* her Vows. 5. Now this Right in our Children we must not only acknowledge to be subordinate to that prior superior Title God has to them; for we are only the *Fathers of their Flesh*, he is the *Father of their Spirits*: But we must Heb. 12. 9. also transfer to our Lord Jesus, whom the Father has constituted the great Trustee both of all the Powers with which he intended mankind should be *ruled*; and of all the Favours with which he intended Mankind should be *blest*'d.

Our Children are God's Children; they are my Sons, Ezek. 16 and my Daughters, saith God, *which thou hast born unto me*; and therefore 'tis Sacrilege to alienate them from 20. him, and to devote them to the Service of the World, and the *Flesh*; 'tis *prophaning the Holy Things of the Lord our God*: And it is our Duty to dedicate them, and dispose of them as he directs. Now he directs us to give them up to Christ, to enroll them among his Disciples, to enter their Names among his Servants, who Psal. 116. being born in his House, belong to his Family, and are 16. entitled to the Protection and Provisions of it, and taken under the Order and Discipline of it.

That's a great Word, and speaks much of the Dignity and Power of our Lord Jesus; *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his Hand*, all the things that concern his Honour and Government, all his part of the matters in variance between himself and fallen Man, he has put into the Hands of the Mediator, as Referee of the Controversie, the Blessed Day's-man, that hath laid his Hand upon us both. Now that which he requires of us (and with good reason) is that we love the Son, and give all things into his Hand, all our Interests and Concerns, and particularly our

Children, who were made and born for Immortality; who are enter'd into a State of Probation and Preparation for Eternity, whom therefore we commit to him
 2 Tim. 1. as to their Guardian, by whose Gospel, Life and Im-
 10. mortality are brought to Light, and brought to Hand.

Hereby we do Honour to the exalted Redeemer, and recognize his Authority, as one to whom the Father
 Joh. 17. 2. has therefore given power over all Flesh, especially over the Spirits of all Flesh, that he should give eternal Life to as many as he had given him, as many of them. We own his Dominion both in Heaven and on Earth, by owning his indisputable Title to our Children; both to their Bodies, by which they are ally'd to the Earth; and to their Souls, by which they are ally'd to Heaven and the World of Spirits.

Hereby we confess, that as we our selves, so our Children are more his than our own, and therefore we desire that both we and ours may live to him. And in thus honouring the Son we honour the Father also, for
 1 Pet. 3. Christ came to bring us to himself, that he might bring
 18. us to God: Our Children are therefore brought to Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant, that through him they may be brought to God, as their God in Covenant. When Israel was taken into Covenant with God, express notice is taken not only of their Captains, and Elders, Deut. 29. and Officers, but of their little ones, as Parties to
 10, 11, 12. the Covenant which the Lord their God made with them.

Hereby we do well for our Children, the best we can do for them, for we give them up to him who is able to do that for them which we cannot do, and which must be done for them, or they are undone. We know they derive through our Loins sinful and corrupt Natures; we know they are shapen in iniquity, they
 Isa. 48. 8. are called, and not miscalled, Transgressors from the Womb; what therefore can we do for them but bring them to him that came to save Sinners, to save them from their sins? They are born polluted, and by presenting them to Christ, we bring them to the Fountain that was open'd
 Zach. 13. for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in from Sin, which is
 1. Uncleannefs. They are born distemper'd, and we thus bring them to the great Physitian to be temper'd, to have their very Constitution alter'd; to have not the Mass of their Blood, but of their Minds, chang'd for the

the better, that as they have born the Image of the Earthy, 1 Cor. 15. they may also bear the Image of the Heavenly. 49.

Now this solemn surrender of our Children to God, as theirs in Covenant, if we our selves be in Covenant with God, I think ought to be done by the Ordinance of *Baptism*, an Ordinance peculiar to the Redeemer's Kingdom, and a Seal as Circumcision was, of the *Righteousness which is by Faith*, and therefore like it, Rom. 4. belonging both to Believers, and to their *Infant-Seed*. H. Our Saviour when he instituted that Ordinance, gave a double intimation concerning his *Gospel-Kingdom* which was then to be set up; one was, that it must not be confin'd to the *Jews*, but spread to the *Gentiles*; therefore go and make all Nations Disciples: The other was, that it should not be confin'd to that Generation, and live and die with the Apostles. It must not be (as the Historian saith of the Roman Commonwealth) *Res unius atatis*; no, it must continue, for Christ will continue at the Head of it, and in the Midst of it always, even to the end of the World. Now as Baptism did subserve the former Design, and attended the progress of the Gospel to the most distant Regions of the Earth, so we have reason to think it was instituted equally to subserve the latter Design, and to attend the propagating of the Gospel to the latest Ages of Time, that by taking early hold of the Seed of the Faithful, and giving their Parents, and Ministers, and Consciences, early hold of them, Provision might be made (as was by the Altar, Ed.) that nothing might Josh. 22. make them cease from fearing the Lord: That thus a Seed 25. might serve the Lord Jesus which should be accounted to Psal. 22. him for a Generation: And by keeping up the Entail, 29, 30. and as it were by a continual Claim, the Name of Christ Psal. 89. might endure for ever, and his Throne as the Days of 28. Heaven.

But waving this Dispute, I insist upon that in which I am sure we are all agreed, that our Children are to be given up to the Lord Jesus; and of his own do we give him, for he hath bought them with a price, that they 1 Chr. 29. may glorify him in Body and Spirit, and he may be 14. honoured even by their Hosanna's. We lend them to the Lord as Hannah did Samuel, that they may be his 1 Sam. 1. all the days of their Life, and if they be so, they shall 28. be his to the endless Ages of Eternity.

B 2

Secondly,

Secondly, We must bring them to Christ by seeking to him for them, as those that are surrender'd to him: They are to be but once Baptiz'd, but they are to be daily pray'd for, and the Promise seal'd to them in their Baptism put in suit and pleaded with God in their behalf. These here brought their Children to Christ, when they beg'd his Blessing on them, and thus we must bring Ours to him; bring their Case to him, the Case of their Souls, their precious Souls, which ought to be laid nearer our Hearts than any thing else that concerns them.

- When Christ was here upon Earth, we read of many that apply'd themselves to him for Mercy for their Children, Lord have Mercy upon my Son, saith one, Mat. 17. Lord have Mercy upon my Daughter, saith another, 15. and the Children far'd the better for the Faith and Mat. 15. Prayers of the Parents: And we may as easily come 22. to him now he is in Heaven, and more easily; and with the same Petition; Lord have Mercy on my Son, on my Daughter that's foolish, and vain, and Rom. 8. 6. carnally minded, which is Death, and much under the power of Satan: Even our little Childrens Souls are to be pray'd for; for we believe they are born in Sin, and Foolishness is bound in their Hearts: And we see how soon corrupt Nature appears and works in them, and how the Tares spring up with the Wheat: Let us therefore be earnest with God for the Operation of his Grace upon their Hearts betimes; that Christ be firm'd Psa. 119. in their Souls when they are young, and they may be 94. sanctified from their Infancy. They are thine, save Gen. 17. them. Ishmael was very young when Abraham pray'd 18. so affectionately, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

Our Children are capable of being pray'd for, and of receiving Benefit by Prayer; for before they are capable of being taught, and of receiving Benefit by Instruction: And as their being Baptiz'd lays us under an Engagement to teach them, so it gives us an Encouragement to pray for them, and we should begin early to do it: Look up to Christ, and beg of him to bless them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly Things, which will be the best Provision, and the best Portion for them.

Be constant in praying for your Children; pray for them as duly as for your selves; as St. Paul for his Friends,

Friends, making mention of them *always* in every Job 1. 5.
Prayer: Be particular in Praying for them; pray for each particular Child, as Holy Job offer'd Burnt-offerings for his Sons, according to the number of them all; that you may be able to say as Hannah, For this Child 1 Sam. 1. I pray'd. Pray for particular Blessings for your Children, according as you see their Case requires, for that Grace which you observe their natural Temper (or Dis-temper rather) calls for.

Let us take heed lest our Prayers degenerate into Formality, and we pray for them only for Custom, and in no better manner than we can soon teach them to pray for themselves, and for us too, by rote. But let us pray for them from a Principle of Concern for their precious Souls, in the Prosperity and Welfare of which, their Happiness, and our Comfort in them, is bound up. When a Child is born, there's a Candle lighted that must burn to Eternity, either in Heaven or Hell, the consideration whereof should awaken us to pray with all possible earnestness for the Salvation of their Souls, next to that of our own.

When they are little, they cannot pray for themselves, and if you do not pray for them, who shou'd. When they are grown up, it may be they are careless, and will not pray for themselves to any Purpose, and then their Case is the more piteous; it may be they are wicked and profane, and hate Prayer, yet continue to pray for them, for while there's Life, there's Hope, and while there's Hope, there's Room for Prayer, and who knows but he who waits to be gracious, may at length be gracious to you, and your Child that is dead, may be 2 Sam. 12. 22.
 alive again.

Have an Eye to Christ in all your Prayers for your Children, let the Prayer be directed to him, as it was here. 'Twas in his Name particularly that they were baptized, and therefore in his Name they must be pray'd for, and into his Hands all our Petitions to God must be put; we may with him plead their Baptism, Lord they are given up to thee to be thine, make them thine own, then own them as thine. Plead his Interest in them as the Children of his Family, the Lambs of his Flock, the Petties of his School, plead your Dedication of them to him, and his Acceptance of them, and resolve to leave them with him.

It

It is by Prayer that we *cast our Care* upon God, cast it upon the Lord Jesus, to whom the Father has *committed all Judgment*, and who is entrusted with the Administration of the Providential Kingdom, in Subserviency to the Mediatorial Kingdom, *our Children* are a considerable Part of our Care, what they will prove, and what will become of them, we must by Prayer cast this Care upon Christ, and believe that the Children of the *Greatest*, are not *above* the Need of his Care, nor those of the *Meanest*, *beneath the Cognizance* of it.

Thirdly, We must bring them to Christ, by *submitting them to the Disposal of his Providence*; when we have by Prayer sought to him for them, we must by a cheerful Acquiescence in his Wisdom and Goodness, *make our selves easie* concerning them; believing, that Christ knows what's fit for them and us, better than we do. We bring them to Christ, when we bring our *Will*, concerning them, into an entire Submission to *his Will*, believing that he will be *sanctified*, and resolving that then we will be *satisfied*.

Lev. 10.
3

Let us make Christ *Guardian* to our Children, not only when we are dead, but while we live; *trust* them *with him*, and put them under his Protection; As *Jacob* did his Children when he was parting with them, Gen. 43. *God Almighty give you Mercy!* And when he was parting from them, *The Angel that redeemed me from all Evil* Gen. 48. (and that can be no other than the Lord Jesus, the Angel of the Covenant) *bles the Lads!* Gen. 16.

When we can refer it to the Divine Will, whether our Children shall be *healthful or sickly, high or low, rich or poor, prosperous or cross'd, thriving or declining* in the World; whether they shall *live to be old, or die young*, provided it may but go well with their precious Souls, and they may be happy to Eternity, then we *bring them to Christ*, as a skilful, faithful Physician, willing he should take *what Method* he pleases with them, so he will but *cure* them, and *save* them. I have read of a good Man, whose Son being dispos'd of in the World, met with great Affliction, which he once very feelingly complain'd of to his good Father, who answer'd (according to the Principle I am now upon) *Any thing Child, to bring thee to Heaven.*

Fourthly

Fourthly, We must bring them to Christ, by *subjecting them*, as far as we can, to the Government of his Grace. Having laid their *Necks* under the *Yoke* of Christ in their Baptism, we must teach them to *draw in it*, and use our Interest in them, and Authority over them, to keep them under that easie Yoke; and *bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of our Lord Jesus*. Eph. 6 4.

Having got them enrol'd among his Servants, we must teach them betimes to know their Master. and to own his Dominion over them, and *their Obligations* to him; *bring them into their Master's Presence*, bring them to see him, bring them to *hear him*, by bringing them to his Word and Ordinances, *feed your Kids beside the Shepherds Tents*; let them have Family Instruction, as soon as they are capable of receiving that, and be brought to sit under the publick Ministry, as soon as they are capable of not being a Disturbance to that. Cant. 1. 8.

Bring them to *Christ's Feet*, by taking Pains to impress upon their Minds, the indispensable Necessity of their being *taught* and *ruled* by Jesus Christ, of their *believing* his Truths, and *obeying* his Laws, in order to their present and Eternal Welfare. We brought them to Christ, by an instituted Sign of their being *his* in their Baptism; we *bring them to Christ*, by the instituted Means of their being *his*, in their Religious Education; both those we second with Prayer, that they may be *his*, thus far we must go, and further we cannot.

For the 2d. You see how you may bring your little Children to Christ, I come next to shew you for your Encouragement, how you may hope he will receive those that are thus brought to him, and what Entertainment they may expect; surely something like the kind Entertainment he here gave to these little ones, *he took them up in his Arms; put his Hand upon them and blessed them*. Such visible, sensible Signs of his Favour we are not now to expect, but that which is more than equivalent in spiritual Blessings.

Only let me premise, that we cannot be so confident of Gods giving his Grace to our Children, if we in Sincerity pray to him for it, and use the Means, as we may be of his giving it to our selves, if we do so. Many a godly Parent no doubt has brought his Children to Christ, as before directed, who yet have provd' wicked and

Joh. 3. 5.

and vile, and Strangers to Christ, and come short of his Blessing, but it has been thorough their own Default; many are sacramentally regenerated, and *born again of Water*, by which they have been Partakers of the Christian Name, who yet are never really regenerated and *born again of the Spirit*, but live and die destitute of the Nature of Christians: All we can say is, that if we thus *bring our Children* to Christ, they stand much *fairer* for, and *nearer* to his Blessing, than if they be not brought to him. There are Promises and Precidents, which we may take Encouragements from, and upon which we are *caused to hope*, that Christ will give them his Grace, will work his *good Work* in them, both as a Token of, and as a Qualification for his *good Will* towards them; And if we do, it will be an Addition to our Comfort, that it is an *Answer to our Prayers*, and the *Fruit of our Labours*; if he doth not it will be a Support to us under our Grief, to have the Testimony of our Conscience, that by the Grace of God, we have in some Measure done our Duty, and then lett the Event with God, whose *Grace is his own*.

Let us now observe the Instance of Christ's Favour to these *Children*, and enquire what we may expect that hath some Resemblance of it.

First, He took them up in his Arms. See how Christ doth more for humble believing Supplicants *than they can ask or think*: It was only desir'd he would touch them, but he did more, he *embrac'd them*; and it speaks not only his wonderful Condescension, but his Compassion and Affection. A little while ago, when he had occasion to set a little Child before his Disciples as a Pattern of Humility, he not only set the Child in the midst of them, which was sufficient to answer his Intention, but he took him in his Arms, to shew his tender Love to those who are as little Children. When Israel was a Child, then I loved him: This spake the Kindness our Saviour had for the Human Nature and Race; his *φιλαργαγία* his Joy in the Habitable Part of the Earth, and his Delight in the Sons of Men.

Christ took up these Children in his Arms as one well pleas'd with them, and concern'd for them, that the Scripture might be fulfill'd which said concerning him, He shall feed his Flock like a Shepherd, he shall gather his Lambs in his Arms, and carry them in his Bosom.

Mar. 9.
36.Hos. 11.
1.

Tit. 3. 4.

Prov. 8.

31.

Isa. 43.

11.

Luk. 2.

28.

Time

Time was when he himself was taken up in old Simeon's Arms: And he did himself pass through the Age of Infancy to make it honourable and comfortable to the Children of his People; and the Expressions of his Favour afterwards to little Children, makes it much more so: When their Mothers and Nurses carry them in their Arms, and are almost tir'd with the Load, let them refresh themselves with this Thought, that the Holy Child Jesus was carry'd in Arms, and did himself take up little Children in his Arms. When Moses was charg'd thus to bear Israel, he found himself aggriev'd, *Have I conceived all this People? Have I begotten them* Num. 11. *that thou shouldst say unto me carry them in thy Bosom,* 12. *as a Nursing Father bears the sucking Child:* But what Moses complain'd of, Christ had Complacency in; he took them up in his Arms: Tis but one Word in the Original, *ἐν αὐτοῦ τοῦ αὐτοῦ*, he in-arm'd them, he took them into his Embraces, as he did his Spouse; who said with set, Pisc. Satisfaction, his Left hand is under my Head, and his Right Cant. 2. 6. Hand doth Embrace me.

But how may we hope he will take our Children in his Arms, when we bring them to him? Surely we may promise our selves no less than what David promis'd himself, *When my Father and my Mother forsake me, then* Psal. 27. *the Lord will take me up.* We may hope, 10.

1. That he will take them up in the Arms of his Power, and Providence; that he will hold their Souls in Life, and protect them from, or carry them through, the Weaknesses and Perils of the Infant-Age; that he will give his Angels, the little Ones Angels, a Charge concerning them, to bear them in their Arms, and their Arms are his Arms, the Arms of his Power. The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower, into which the righteous are not only welcome to run themselves, but to bring their Children, and where they and theirs may hope to be safe: So safe as that no real Evil, no only Evil shall befall them. The Arm of the Lord is revealed in favour of the little Ones, even of a sinful Race, witness those of unbelieving murmuring Israel. But your little Ones, tho' living in a barren Wilderness, and likely to be made a Prey, them will I bring into that Land which I have promis'd, and you have despu'd; much more shall it be stretched out for the Relief and Preservation of the faithful Seed, whose Refuge the

Deut. 33. *Eternal God is and will be, and underneath them are the everlasting Arms; such are the Arms of the Lord Jesus, which cannot faint or be weary, and by which all things are upheld, else they would sink.*

27.

That Divine Providence which supports Children in their Childhood, and carries them through that helpless Age, which puts it into the Hearts of Parents to provide for them, which preserves to them their Limbs and Senses, of which they might, by a thousand ill Accidents, be *depriv'd* in a Moment; by which they grow in *Strength* and *Stature*, is to be mention'd to the Honour of the Redeemer, to whom it is owing that the Race of Mankind continues in *Being* upon the Face of the Earth, tho' guilty and obnoxious.

Col. i. 16.

2 Pet. 3.

15.

Psal. 22.

9, 10.

Psal. 71.

5, 6.

'Tis in the Redeemer's Arms, by whom all things consist, that Children are *born up*, and carry'd on to full Age; for to him are owing all the *Reprieves* of God's *Patience*, and all the *Gifts* of his common *Providence*. This we have all *experienc'd* our selves, and must acknowledge it with thankfulness to the Redeemer's *Praise*, as the Royal Psalmist doth, *Thou art he that took me out of the Womb; thou didst make me hope, and kep'st me in safety when I was upon my Mother's Breast: I was cast upon thee from the Womb, thou art my God from my Mother's Belly—By thee have I been holden up—and therefore my praise shall be continually of thee.* And what we have *Experienc'd* our selves, we may humbly *expect* for our Children, if we bring them to *Christ*, to whom we have brought our selves.

2. That he will take them up in the Arms of his *Pity* and *Grace*; that he will in *Compassion* to their precious Souls, the case of which by Nature is very *pitiful*, undertake to *cleanse* and *cure* them; to *sanctify* and *save* them; that as in his *Love* and *Pity* he hath *shed his Blood* to wash from *Sin*, and so prepared the *Laver*, he will in *Love* to them, and *Pity* to them, sprinkle that purifying healing Blood upon them, that they may by it be washed from *their Sin*, and sanctified for God, as *their God*.

The loveliest sweetest Babe we ever saw, tho' like *Moses* in the Ark of *Bulrushes*, exceeding fair, to *Admiration*, yet like him, 'tis born in a *Land of Egypt*, in a *House of Bondage*, like him mark'd for the *Sword* as soon as Born, nay, 'tis like the Infant in *Ezekiel's Parable*,

Parable, polluted in its own Blood, and cast out to the Ezek. 16.
 loathing of its Person: 'Tis shapen in Iniquity, 'tis born 5, 6.
 in Sin, and its precious Soul is defiled and deformed,
 and an Object of Pity. 'Tis a melancholy Thought,
 and a Damp to the Pleasure we take in our Children:
 But this is a Comfort, that Christ has Compassion on
 them, has Arms to gather them up in, and has given us
 hopes that he will say unto them live, yea, he will say Ezek. 16.
 unto them live, will wash them from their Filth, will 9, 10.
 Cloath them with his Grace, and the Time will be a
 Time of Love indeed, both to them and us. That he
 will embrace them as the Father of the Prodigal did
 his returning Son, when he fell on his Neck and kissed Luk. 15.
 him, will receive them into the Arms of a Covenant of 20.
 Grace, out of which they shall never be pluck'd, and
 in which they shall be for ever easie and happy.

Secondly, He put his Hands upon them: They desir'd Rev. 1. 17,
 he would touch them, one Touch from Christ has done
 wonders; but he did more, he put his Hands on them,
 as he did on John when he said, fear not; and as he
 did on many whom he cur'd; to intimate that Virtue
 went out of him, for the purpose to which he in-
 tended it.

But how may we hope that Jesus Christ will now put
 his Hand upon us and ours.

1. If he set us and ours apart for himself, as his own Psal. 4. 3.
 peculiar People, we may say he puts his Hand upon us
 and ours; as the Buyer lays his Hand on the Goods he
 has agreed for, they are now his own: As Jacob put
 his Hand on the Head of Joseph's Sons, to signifie not
 only his Blessing them, but his Adopting them, and Gen. 48.
 taking them for his own, Let my Name be named upon 16,
 them. This we hope Christ doth for our Children when
 we bring them to him, he owns them for his, and we
 may say they do in some degree belong to Christ, are
 Retainers to his Family.

It is an Honour and Comfort to have our little
 Children called Christians, called by Christ's Name, to
 have them number'd among his peculiar Ones; among
 the Servants born in his House, distinguish'd from the
 Children of Heathens that have not the Knowledge of
 God and Christ; to have them added to the Church,
 which is God's Treasure in the World, Planted in his
 Vineyard, sown in his Field, to be a Holy Seed, a Seed

for God, especially if we have some good hopes through Grace that they are not only admitted to a place in the Courts of God's House now, but are design'd for his Holy Place above, for the Congregation of the Righteous there. If Christ will but put his Hand upon them, and say, *They shall be mine in that Day when I make up my Jewels*, we have enough, we have all we wish'd for in bringing them to him.

2. If he give his holy Spirit to us and ours, it may truly be said, he puts his Hand upon us and them. The Spirit is sometimes call'd the Finger of God, and sometimes the Hand of God; so that Christ's putting his Hand upon us, not only puts us into a Relation to him, but works a real change in us, lays hold on the Soul for him, and puts his Image, as well as Superscription, upon it. The laying on of Hands was a Ceremony us'd in conferring the Holy Ghost, and this we pray for, and hope for from Christ, for our Children, when we bring them to him.

And there are words upon which he has encourag'd us to hope for this. We find it possible that Children may be sanctified from their Birth, that they may be filled with the Holy Ghost from their Mother's Womb; nay, we find it promis'd that God will pour his Spirit upon our Seed, and his Blessing, that Blessing, that Blessing of Blessings upon our Offspring: That his Spirit upon thee shall not depart from thy Seed: That his Spirit shall be pour'd out upon our Sons and Daughters; that our Children shall all be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace: The New Testament Promise is to us and to our Children, not only that of the forgiveness of Sins, but that of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. These are the true sayings of God, and we may put them in Suit, and expect the Performance of them for our Children when we bring them to Christ: And O that he would thus put his Hand upon them.

Thirdly, He blessed them: He was desir'd to pray for a Blessing for them, but he did more, he commanded the Blessing, blest'd with Authority; he pronounc'd them blessed, and thereby made them so; for those whom he blesteth are blessed indeed. Christ is the great High-Priest whose Office it is to bless the People of God, and all theirs. When he parted from his Disciples at his Ascension, he blessed them; he left Blessings behind him for

for his Church on Earth, and all the Members of it, the little Ones not excepted.

When God took *Abraham* into Covenant, he promis'd to *blefs him*, and the *Blessing* wherewith he *blest* him was, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy Seed*: But that was not all, he promis'd in the *Messiah* who should descend from his Loins, *all the Nations of the Earth should be blest*, not only *blest by him*, but *blest in him*, in that *Righteous* and *Salvation* which should be wrought out, and brought in by him. The Transferring of this *Blessing* was the great Care and Business of the Patriarchs, *Jacob* and *Esau* strove for it, and *Jacob* got it; the *Jews* sin'd it away for themselves, but not for the World, and therefore by the Gospel this *Blessing* of *Abraham* comes upon the *Gentiles*, that comprehensive *Blessing*, that God will be a God to them that believe, and to their *Seed*: This *Blessing* *Christ* has the conferring of, for he is the *Mediator* of the Covenant, and *Trustee* of the *Blessings* of it: Now if we in Faith bring our Children to him, as *Mediator*, we may hope he will bestow this *Blessing* upon them with other the Children of the Church; for *St. Peter* gives the *Jews* this Reason why God having raised up his Son *Jesus*, sent him to *blest* them, because they were the Children of the *Prophets*, and of the Covenant. Now if we and ours be Children of the *Prophets* and of the Covenant, of the *Prophets* by our Assent to Gospel Truths, and of the Covenant, by our consent to Gospel Terms we may hope to inherit, (and our Seed after us) that *Blessing* which *Christ* was sent to bestow.

The Prayers made by the *Israel* of God for all its Members from the least to the greatest, are encouraging to us to hope that they shall share in the *Blessing*: Our Children are not only pray'd for by us as parts of our Family, but they are pray'd for by all that in every place call on the Name of *Jesus Christ*; their Lord and ours, as belonging to *Christ's Family*, to the *Nursery* in that Family; The Welfare and Prosperity of which, all that are concern'd for the perpetuating of *Christ's Name* and *Throne*, cannot but have a particular and tender concern for. In bringing them to *Christ*, we bring them within the Prayers of all good Christians which we hope may obtain a *Blessing* for them.

The

The Promises made to the Israel of God are yet more encouraging; especially since Christ came to confirm the Promises made to the Fathers, that in him they might be yea and Amen. Now it is promis'd, that the Generation of the Upright shall be blessed; that the Seed of God's Servants shall be established before him: That they shall be so remarkably pious and prosperous, that all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the Seed which the Lord has blessed. Lord be it unto thy Servants according to the Word which thou hast spoken.

APPLICATION.

First, Let me from hence address my self to Children, to little Children, to the Lambs of the Flock, to the youngest that can bear with Understanding, will not you be glad to hear this, that the Lord Jesus Christ has a tender Concern and Affection for you, and he has Blessings in store for you, if you apply your selves to him, according to your Capacity? Shall I speak to you in the Words of David, Come ye Children, hearken to me, and I will teach you, as young as you are the Fear of the Lord, Nay, I wou'd teach you not only the Fear of God, but the Faith of Christ, and therefore address my self to you, in the Words of St. Paul, My little Children, of whom I travail in Birth again, until Christ be formed in you, 'till his Image be renewed up in you, and he live in you.

You hear, dear little ones, what Christ has done for you, what Favour he hath shew'd to those of your Age, and will not you put in for an Interest in his Favour, and the Provision he has made for the Entertainment of Children? Hath he thus lov'd you, and will not you love him? Has he such kind Thoughts towards you, and will not you have Dutiful Thoughts towards him? Doth he invite you to him, and will not you accept of his Invitation? He saith here, suffer little Children not only to be brought to me, but to come to me, to come as they can themselves, to make it their own Act and Deed, and do not forbid them, for it is possible, that of those of their Age may be the Kingdom of God, that they may get to Heaven.

You love those that take Notice of you, and play with you, and give you Toys, and will you not love those that pray for you, and instruct you, and would

would bring you to be acquainted with the best things? Will you not reckon them your Friends indeed, that seek the Welfare of your Souls, your Eternal Welfare?

Be sensible betimes of the Corruption of your Nature, that *Foolishness* is bound in your Heart, and give all Diligence to get a Change wrought in you: Begin betimes to put a Difference between God's Name and other Names; God's Book and other Books; God's Day and other Days. Be dutiful to your Parents, and labour to be a Comfort to them. Love Prayer, learn to pray, and be much in it. Mortify your Passions, keep them under, and do not indulge them. Hate and abhor lying, and make Conscience of speaking Truth.

There are little Books, both of Counsels and Examples, suited to your Age, *The Token for Children*, by Mr. Janeway, and Mr. White's little Book for little Children, which you shou'd not be Strangers to. Love your Catechism, and hold fast the Form of sound Words, which you have heard; but above all, see to it that from your Childhood you know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise to Salvation.

Lay your selves at Christ's Feet, and he will take you up in his Arms: give yourselves to him, and he will give himself in his Graces and Comforts to you. Lye in his Way, by a diligent Attendance on his Ordinances, and he will not pass by without putting his Hand on you. And if you value his Blessings aright, and be earnest with him for a Blessing, he will bless you with the best of Blessings, such as will make you Eternally Blessed.

Secondly, This Passage speaks both Direction and Encouragement to Christian Parents, *I write unto you Fathers*, and unto you Mothers, that have a tender Concern for your Children, and desire they may do well, and would fain do well for them, observe the Entertainment Christ gave to the Children that were bro't to him, and see it written for your Learning.

1. Let this direct us that are Parents concerning our Children. We have seen how we are to bring them to Christ, and have we thus brought them to him? We brought them to Baptism, but did we thereupon bring them to Christ? Was it done as unto the Lord? If it was, let us now make it to appear. Have we brought our
 Chil-

Children to Christ, with Hopes that they have been accepted of him.

1. Let us then still *bring them to him* by Faith and Prayer, according as their Case requires; be daily *laying them at his Feet*, by resigning them to his Conduct, and referring all Events concerning them, to his wise and gracious Disposal. Be daily *putting them in his Arms*, by intreating his Favour towards them, as that which is the Life of their Souls, and better than the Life of the Body.

You see here what to desire and pray for, for your Children, that *the Mediator's Blessing* may be *their Portion*, for that's a Portion for the Soul and Eternity, a *good Part* that shall never be taken away from those that have it. Covet not *great things* in the *World* for them, a little will serve to bear their Charges through it, but be *earnest* with God for Blessings for them in *Heavenly Things* by *Christ Jesus*; let them have these and they have enough.

When you *blest* your Children, (and it is good sometimes to do it solemnly) let *your Eye* be to *Christ*, in whom alone it is that Blessings are entail'd on us, and ours; and thro' whose Hand they are deriv'd. The Patriarchs in blessing their Sons had *an Eye* to a *Christ to come*, and to him now he is come much more ought we to have *an Eye*.

Pray daily *with* your Children, and Servants, that they may hear you pray for them, and may thereby be taught and quickned to pray *for themselves*; I hope none of you dare live in the Neglect of Family Prayer, dare omit it either Morning or Evening, when you know that instead of the Blessing of Christ, the *Wrath* and *Curse* of God is poured out *on the Families that call not on his Name*; while you and your Families live without Prayer, you live without God; you make no *Joint-Acknowledgment* of him, and can expect no *Joint-receiving* from him. It may justly be fear'd that those who throw aside so necessary, so comfortable, so advantageous a Duty as *Family Prayer* is, do not *make Conscience* of secret Prayer neither, but frequently omit *that*, or at least, do not *make a Business* of it, but suffer it to degenerate into a Formality; and how can you expect daily Blessings upon your Children, if you do not daily ask for them? Or to have

have an Interest in the Intercession which Jesus Christ See my
 is continually making for us in Heaven, if you do not Sermon of
 pray continually Morning and Evening, in the Vertue a Church in
 of that Intercession. Have you settled a Correspondence the House,
 dence between Christ and your Families, by devoting Printed
 your Children to him in their Baptism, and will you 1704.
 not keep up that Correspondence? How can you expect
 the Benefit of it, if you do not on your Part keep it up?

You that have the Charge of Families, remember you
 are Christians, and ought in that Capacity to confess
 Christ, and to own and honour him before your Families;
 there is such a general Disuse of Christian Conference;
 that most are asham'd by that, to acknowledge Christ
 before their Neighbours, but they cannot have that Pre-
 tence to decline it before their own Children and Ser-
 vants: If therefore with the Heart you believe unto Righ- Rom. 10.
 teousness, think how necessary it is, that thus with the 10.
 Mouth you make Confession unto Salvation. Remember
 that your Family is a Family of Christians, not a Herd
 of Negroes; I shou'd say a Herd of Brute Beasts (for
 those that have Charge of Negroes, ought to pray for
 them, and to have them pray'd with) and you look
 upon them as no better than Brute Beasts, if you do
 not pray with them; nay and worse, for the Ox knows
 his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib, but you go not
 before them in acknowledging their great Owner, nor Isa. 1. 2
 lead them to the Footstool of their Master's Throne of
 Grace. But I hope better things of you.

Use the Baptism of your Children, as an Argument
 with your selves to pray with them, and then you may
 use it as a Plea with God, for the Mercies you ask of
 him for them. Lord Jesus, I have presented my Chil-
 dren to thee, and thou hast accepted them, I still pre-
 sent them to thee, and wilt not thou still accept them?
 Thou hast blessed them, wilt thou not say they shall be
 blessed? and then they are blessed indeed.

2. Let us then bring them up for him; have we any
 good Hope thro' Grace, that Christ has own'd our De-
 dication of ours to him, has taken them up in his Arms,
 put his Hands on them, and blessed them, let us then re-
 ceive each of them from him again, as it is given us,
 with the same Charge that Pharaoh's Daughter gave to
 Moses's Mother, Take this Child and nurse it for me. You
 are to look upon your Children as given up to Christ,
 and to manage them accordingly.

Has Christ shew'd such a tender Affection to your little Children, be not you then harden'd against them, do not rule them with Rigour, *provoke them not to Wrath*, least they be discouraged. *Be gentle among them, for so the Nurse cherisheth her Children.* Study to make your Children love you, and then every thing you enjoyn
 Eph. 6. 4. them will be easie. When you are angry at them,
 2 Thef. 2. let it be for that only, for which you know Christ
 7. wou'd be angry at them, and that is for their Sins, which must be restrain'd by the Rod and Reproof, not for their Weaknesses and Childish Infirmities, which Time will wear off. Has Christ blessed your Children, and put Honour upon them? Do not you curse them, and give them such scurilous Language as Saul gave to his Son Jonathan, least you teach them to give the like to their Inferiors. *Bless and curse not.*

1 Sam. 20

30.

Have you given up your Children to Christ, bring them up then in his Nurture and Admonition. It is not enough that you pray with them and for them daily, but you must daily instruct them in the things of God, and in all those things that will be profitable to them. It is observable, that immediately after the laying down of that great Truth, *That the Lord our God is one Lord*, and of that great Law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine Heart*, it follows as an indispensable
 Deut. 6. Duty, and a Means of keeping up Religion in the
 4, 5, 6, 7. World, *Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children*, and look upon it to be one of the most needful Pieces of Work thou hast to do, more needful to get the Knowledge of God for them, than to get Estates for them, Nay then to get Bread for them; thou shalt therefore not only hear them their Catechism once a Week, but thou shalt talk freely and familiarly of the Truths and Laws of God among them, with all Gravity and Seriousness, *when thou sittest with them in thine House*, and *when thou walkest with them by the Way*, at Night *when thou liest down* read a Portion of Scripture to them, and oblige them to take Notice of it, and again in the Morning *when thou risest up*, that thus the Word of Christ might dwell in them richly. You know they cannot learn Latin but they must go to School every Day, nor learn a Trade, but must go to Shop every Day and ought they not to have daily Instructions out of the Word of God, in order to their getting the Knowledge of Christ, which is infinitely more excellent?

Take

Take particular Care to bring your Children acquainted with *Jesus Christ*, the true *Treasure hid in the Field of the Scriptures*, Christ and him crucified, Christ and him glorified. You call the *Baptizing* of your Children, the *Christning* of them. I wish you won'd consider it, and think how little it will avail them to have been christned, if they do not learn Christ, if they be not taught the Truth *as it is in Jesus*. Let not your Children rest in a meer *Natural Religion*, that's good, 'tis necessary, but it is not enough; You must make them sensible of their Need of Christ, of their lost and undone Condition without him; must endeavour to lead them into the Mysteries of our Reconciliation to God, and our Redemption from Sin and Wrath by a Mediator, and O that they may experimentally know him, and the Power of his Resurrection!

Eph. 4.
20. 21.

In teaching Children the Knowledge of God, both the Parents are concern'd to do their Part. *Solomon* speaks both of the *Instruction of the Father*, and the *Law of the Mother*; but when they are little, the *Mother* hath a greater Opportunity of instilling into them that which is good, and ought to improve it. *Timothy* got to know the Holy Scriptures from his Childhood, by being brought up under a good *Mother*, and *Grand-Mother*; and *King Lemuel* when he is come to the Throne, forgets not the *Prophecy that his Mother taught him*.

Prov 1. 8,

2 Tim. 1,
5,
Prov. 31.
1.

And as in other Accomplishments of your Children, so in the Business of Religion, which is their best and true Accomplishment, you must as they come to be capable, put them on to *Advance*; when they have gone thro' their Learning, you put them into *Business*; when they have serv'd their Apprentiship, you set them up for themselves; and thus when you have brought them to some competent Knowledge of Christ, and have some Reason to hope, that the Spirit of Grace has begun a good Work in their Souls, perswade them to take the Covenant of Baptism upon themselves, in the Use of the other Seal, that of the *Lord's Supper*, and so by their own Act and Deed, to joyn themselves to the Lord. Tell them you brought them to Christ, when they were Infants, you have been ever since shewing them the way to him, and now they must come themselves to him, tho' they be weak, if they be willing, you may assure them they shall be welcome; for those that

D 2

come

Joh. 6.37. *come unto him he will not, no he will not cast them out: & un, a* If they sit down at his Feet to hear his words, he will double *take them up in his Arms, and bless them.*

Negative. And there is one thing more in which I must be a Monitor particularly, else I should not be a faithful Monitor to Parents, who have brought their Children to Christ, and hope that he hath blessed them, and that is, that they be careful how they dispose of them in the World when they are grown up; lest by an Error here they undo all that they have been doing for them. In putting them Apprentices, placing them in Callings, and in Marrying them, let Christ be consulted about it; let the Interests of the better part be consulted in it; that's best for them which is best for their Souls, against which you should not be sway'd by any worldly Interests or Regards whatsoever. If you have laid a good Foundation, let it be your Care and Endeavour that it may be built upon.

2. Let this Encourage us that are Parents concerning our Children, and enable us to think of them with Comfort and Hope in the midst of our Cares about them. They are dear to us, we look with Pleasure upon these Olive Plants round about our Tables, yet not without a mixture of Pain, because Children are (as we commonly say) certain Cares, but uncertain Comforts: These Arrows in the Hand, may prove Arrows in the Heart; Absalom, whose Name signifies The Peace of his Father, liv'd to be his greatest Trouble: But when we consider that we have brought them to Christ, and he has received them, we cannot but thank God and take Courage. When we wish well to them, we would willingly hope well; and this is ground of Hope that our Lord Jesus has express'd so much Favour to little Children.

1. This may Comfort and Encourage the tender careful Mothers in nursing them, that they are carrying those in their Arms whom Christ hath taken up in his; not only their natural Affection to them as pieces of themselves may sweeten and ease the pains they take about them, that makes even the Sea Monsters draw out their Breasts and give suck to their Young: But their gracious Affection to them as Members of Christ, as beloved of him, 1 Tim. 6. 1, and partakers of benefit by him, may much more do it. You are careful for them with all this Care, they require a constant Attendance, and many a Time, it may be, break your sleep, but if you do it as unto the Lord, if you have

have an Eye to *Christ* in it: This I do for a Child that is *Adopted* into his Family, as well as *Born* into mine; you may depend upon him to *pay you your Wages*, tho' *Exod. 2.9.* it be your own Child. Your Care about your little ones keeps you from Church, it may be, many a time, and keeps you that you cannot spend so much time in your Closets as you us'd to do: But if thus it be *sanctified* by an Eye to our Lord Jesus, and by your Prayers to God for them as *his*, more than as your own, you are therein truly *serving the Lord Christ* your selves, and not only so, but are *breeding up* Servants for him, that you hope will be *Vessels of Grace and Glory*.

2. This may Comfort and Encourage us if our Children labour under any *bodily Weaknesses and Infirmities*, if they be *unhealthful* and often *ailing*, which is an *allay* to our Comfort in them: Let *this* serve to ballance *that*, if they belong to Christ and be *blessed* of him, they are *blessed* indeed, and nothing amiss of that kind shall be any *prejudice* to their Blessedness, or diminution of it, but may, being *Sanctified*, become rather a *Friend and Furtherance* to it; many have been the wiser and better, the more humble and heavenly for their having *born the Yoke* of Affliction in their Youth: You see what an *Lam. 3.* Affection Christ discover'd for these Children, and may 27. conclude by reflecting upon your selves, that he has a particular tenderness for Children in Affliction: Those are commonly most *indulg'd* by their Parents that are *sickly*, and like as a Father pities those Children, so doth *Psal. 103.* the Lord Jesus much more, as he often evidenc'd when 13. he was upon Earth. As the *abiding Illnesses* of the Children are the Parents continual Affliction, 'tis a *Cross* they are to *take up daily*, so the *abiding Compassions* of Christ towards them, ought to be their *continual Consolation*, and a Cordial they may have recourse to *daily*.

3. This may Comfort and Encourage us in *Teaching and Catechizing* our Children, in giving them a pious Education, and in praying with them and for them, that we are doing it *for Christ*; that we are *workers together with him*, and we may hope he will *work together with us*, and then our Labour shall not be in *vain*: If we have given them to Christ, they shall be taught by his Spirit, and are within the reach of that precious Promise, that all shall know God, *from the least even to the greatest.* It *Heb. 8. 11.* may be they are dull and slow, and not so apt to learn as we could wish; Christ's own Disciples were so, yet he

he bore with them, and brought them at last to a full Assurance of Understanding, and therefore despair not concerning your Children that are but of a small Capacity. It may be your Children are hopeful and forward, and very promising, and it is your Joy to see it in hopes they will be Ornaments to your Families, but it ought to be much more so, in hopes they will be in their Day faithful Servants to the Interests of God's Kingdom among Men. And what Prospect can be more pleasing, next to that of our own everlasting Bliss, than to have good Hope through Grace, that our Children shall be praising God on Earth; when we are praising him in Heaven, and that we and they shall be together for ever praising him: *I have no greater joy, saith the Apostle, than to hear that my Children walk in the Truth.*

4. This may Comfort and Encourage us in all our Cares concerning our Children when they grow up, in providing for them, and disposing of them. If we have in Sincerity given them up to Christ, and he has accepted of them, we may hope he will dispose of every thing, that concerns them, *for the best*, and they shall in this World reap the Benefit of the Promises made to the Faithful and their Seed; and the Prayers made by the Faithful for their Seed. If they be not Feasted, yet verily they shall be Fed; if we have but little to give them, yet the Blessing of Christ upon that little, will make it every way better to them than the Riches of many wicked. Many, no doubt, have had reason to acknowledge that their comfortable Passage through this World has been very much owing to the Blessing of Christ, upon their early Dedication to him, and Education for him. If Christ has taken up our little Ones into his Arms, provided they do not by their Wickedness throw themselves out of his Arms, we may be sure he is able to keep what we have committed to him, through all the Attempts of an ensnaring World, that he will never drop them, neither shall any pluck them out of his Hands.
- Psal. 37. Faithful and their Seed; and the Prayers made by the
25, 26. Faithful for their Seed. If they be not Feasted, yet verily they shall be Fed; if we have but little to give them,
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- Joh. 10. 28. attempts of an ensnaring World, that he will never drop them, neither shall any pluck them out of his Hands.

5. This may Comfort and Encourage us, if our Children be removed from us by Death in their Childhood: This is a common case; that which came forth like a Flower, is soon cut down, and the Gourd which came up one Night, and which we were exceeding glad of, withers the next Night, and leaves us in Tears: Now it is enough to silence us in such a case, that 'tis the Lord that gave, and the Lord that taketh away, and if he taketh away who

can hinder him? May he not do what he will with his own? Let Aaron therefore hold his peace, for God is glorified: But this goes further, and may satisfy us that if Christ has own'd them in the Kingdom of his Grace, he will receive them into the Kingdom of his Glory. We are indeed kept in the dark concerning the State of those that die in Infancy, they are left to the Mercy of God, but the Children that are given up to Christ by their believing Parents, are not left to uncovenanted Mercy: The Lord knows them that are his, tho' we do not; but we may hope it shall go well with those whom Christ has taken up in his Arms, and bless'd: And that he who was so well pleas'd with the Childrens Hosannas, even in the Old Jerusalem, will reckon himself glorified by their Hallelujahs in the New Jerusalem. Lev. 10. 3. Mat. 21. 15, 16.

6. This may Comfort and Encourage us if we should be taken away from our Children by Death, while they are little: This also is a common case, and a mournful one: We know not how soon we may fall under the Arrests of Death, and may see the Day, that awful Day approaching, which will cut off the number of our Months in the midst. In such a case as to our own Souls, we may perhaps be able to say as our Master did with an Air of Triumph, *Now we are no more in this World* (O that we may be able at such a time with cheerfulness to say so!) But tho' we should, yet like him concerning his Disciples, we must say concerning our Children, *But these are in the World*; How shall we leave them? Where and with whom shall we leave them? With whom but with him who hath said, *Leave thy Fatherless Children with me, I will preserve them alive, and let thy Widows trust in me*; who hath taken it among the Titles of his Honour to be a *Father of the fatherless*, and a *Judge of the Widows*. If we have made Christ Guardian to our Children, let us make it appear we are entirely well satisfy'd in his Wisdom and Faithfulness. Joh. 17. 11. Jer. 49. 11. Psal. 68. 5.

But Lastly, What may we have to Comfort and Encourage us, if our Children should prove *Wicked* and *Vile*; if they should forsake their God, and the God of their Fathers, and walk in the Paths of the Destroyer, notwithstanding our utmost Endeavours to engage them for Christ? 'Tis very often a Case in Fact, we cannot deny it: 'Tis possible the best Parents may have the worst Children; yet if we should suppose a falling from Grace and Holiness adherent, which through the Divine Condescension and Compassion might have avail'd to the Salvation

vation of such as die in Infancy, that will not infer a falling from Grace and Holiness inherent; what Christ doth herein we know not now, but we shall know hereafter: But Disputes in this case are cold Comforts to the poor Parents, whose Hearts bleed and break to see the destructive Courses which their Children take, whom they thought they had lodg'd safe in the Hands of the Mediator; for whom they have pray'd many a Prayer, and shed many a Tear: They thought Christ had taken them up in his Arms, put his Hands upon them, and blessed them, but it doth not prove so, what shall we say to comfort such?

It may be some Satisfaction to them, that however it goes with their Children, Christ will be glorified; if they do not give Honour to him, he will get him Honour upon them: And if God be sanctified, we ought to be satisfy'd; and with Reverence to behold both the Goodness and Severity of God; on them which fall, Severity; but towards them that stand, Goodness; if they continue in his Goodness.

But it will be yet more Satisfaction to them, if they have the Testimony of their Consciences for them, that they have done their Duty, which they did with a Resolution to leave the Event with God. They knew they could not give Grace to their Children; but their Hearts can witness for them, that, to the best of their Power, they dig'd about these barren Trees, and dung'd them, as the Dresser of the Vineyard did; and if they bring forth Fruit well, they shall have the Comfort, and God the Glory; but if not, they must be content to see them cut down; and tho' they cannot have Comfort in that, yet God will have Glory, and they acquiesce.

But the greatest Comfort of all in such a Case is, that the Unbelief and Disobedience of their Children shall not make void God's Promise to them, and therefore ought not to make void their Comfort in God: Tho' Israel be not gather'd, yet shall I be glorious. Abraham is happy in Heaven, tho' there be those in Hell that can call Abraham Father. It was the Comfort of Holy David, tho' he saw a great deal of Sin and Trouble in his Family, Although my House be not so with God as I could wish it, yet I am sure of this, he has made with me an everlasting Covenant, which is well-ordered in all things: and sure, and that's all my Salvation, and therefore shall be all my desire.

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